DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 565 CS 508 194

AUTHOR Walsh, Kay D.
TITLE Telling a Good Story: Origins of Broadcast Drama Criticism.
PUB DATE 17 Apr 93
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Broadcast Education Association (Las Vegas, NV, April 12-16, 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audience Awareness; Broadcast Industry; Criticism; *Cultural Context; *Drama; Mass Media Role; Media Research; *Periodicals; *Popular Culture; *Radio; Story Telling
IDENTIFIERS Historical Background; *Media History; *Radio Plays

ABSTRACT

To gain insight into how critical standards for broadcast drama evolved with time, this paper examines the critical response to the development of broadcast drama in the first two decades of radio (1920-1940), as reported in the periodical press. The paper is based on two underlying assumptions: (1) that the stories a society tells are indicative of that society's character and, therefore, worthy of examination; and (2) that criticism is worthy of consideration because it is part of the negotiation process that creates the broadcast stories and storytelling techniques. The sources examined included general circulation and specialty magazines, but excluded daily newspapers. The paper reports that, after radio's first decade, specialized publications, such as "Broadcasting" and "Billboard," began to pay serious business-oriented attention to radio, in addition to the radio drama reviews that appeared in general interest magazines. The paper notes that American academics always tended to consider electronic communication more significant as a commercial enterprise than as an artistic endeavor. The paper relates that critics agreed, however, that radio--like other fictional forms--should not merely entertain, but should add some new dimension to the listener's body of knowledge, and that these notions of cultural uplift competed with concerns for socialization and education in that respect. The result was, according to the paper, that although the very idea of radio drama as an art was at issue with virtually all the critics throughout the 1930s, an enduring framework for broadcast criticism was constructed during the first two decades of commercial radio. (Contains 42 references.) (NKA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

CS

ED359565

TELLING A GOOD STORY: ORIGINS OF BROADCAST DRAMA CRITICISM

by

KAY D. WALSH, Ph.D.

Frostburg State University
Frostburg, Maryland 21532

Debut Paper Presented to the History Division
of the Broadcast Education Association.

April 17, 1993

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS508194

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kay Walsh

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

TELLING A GOOD STORY: ORIGINS OF BROADCAST DRAMA CRITICISM

This paper examines the critical response to the development of broadcast drama in the first two decades of radio. The point of the investigation is to gain insight into how critical standards for broadcast drama evolved. Why were some dramatic programs perceived as being superior to others? And what particular elements were cited--either implicitly or explicitly--in attaching these evaluative labels?

Several assumptions underlie this choice of topic. Primary among these is the idea that the stories a society tells are indicative of that society's character and are, therefore, worthy of examination. With the advent of widespread broadcast communication, radio became one of the nation's most popular and powerful storytellers, shaping its fictions to the mood of its audience--both influencing and influenced by the society it served.

A corollary assumption is that criticism is worthy of consideration because it is part of the negotiation process that creates the broadcast stories and storytelling techniques. The critics do not dictate the acceptance or rejection of particular stories or styles of fiction, but they do identify key issues and offer individual responses to the fiction. So criticism is seen here as contributory to the creation of a body of fictions that express the common values and beliefs of the society.

Based on these assumptions, this paper focuses on evaluative criticism of broadcast fiction and examines the evolution of critical standards as reported in the periodical press. The sources examined here include general circulation and specialty magazines, but exclude daily newspapers. This choice of sources is based on the rationale that the timeframe and article length for magazines is more conducive to evaluative comment than the daily demands of newspaper reviewing. The examination of these sources begins with the birth of commercial radio in 1920.

Implications of a New Technology

More than any other of the expressive media, radio was a democratic form. Amateurism was the soul of radio's development and early broadcasters saw programming as incidental to the wonder of the technology. As with most new media, the earliest predictions for the use of radio favored the aggrandizement of the then current modes of expression--not adaptation of them (Davis, 1976).

Among the earliest commentaries was a 1922 Living Age article that proclaimed, "If anyone remains uncultured today, it will be against the combined efforts of the world" (Hart, 1922, p. 948). A 1924 Outlook article announced: "With almost stunning suddenness the radio has become a power boundless in possibilities for good and evil" (Radio--the New Social Force, 1924, March 19, p. 465). Even a Variety article enthused over the ability of a syndicated radio

series to "bring New York writing and entertaining to the provinces" (Radio Series by Authors Syndicated, 1925, July 2, p. 70).

These early critics considered social service radio's mandate and as broadcast drama developed, this remained the primary criterion. Although the trade press saw access to the mass audience as a positive factor in providing this service, the majority of popular critics were less optimistic about the integration of commercial necessity and social good. In 1926, a Current History article on "The Abuses of Radio Broadcasting" deplored the "intrusion" of advertising, but accepted it as inevitable. The author complained that commercial demands downgraded programming and invited the valuation of "comic strip" programming over musical instruction and religion. He charged that "pampering those who 'do not eagerly seek education' is making an unreasonable fetish of democracy" (Volkening, 1926, p. 398).

Gilbert Seldes suggested to New Republic readers in 1927 that the very accessibility of radio receivers had adversely affected the quality of programming. "Radio receivers were cheap, therefore there was never any chic in owning one. This must account for the quality of radio programs. The new form of communication was instantly recognized as a universal one and the right name was found for it in broadcasting" (March 23, 1927, p. 140). Seldes believed that broadcast communication carried a greater impact than personal

communication, and he worried about the lack of feedback in such an influential medium. As an occasional broadcaster himself, he refrained from placing sole blame for lack of quality on the broadcaster, however. His argument was that because the system made communication a one-way process, the quality of the content would inevitably be adversely affected.

Sociologist Marshall Beuick downplayed the impact of radio in "The Limited Social Effects of Radio Broadcasting," an essay in which he suggested that much of the positive commentary on radio to that stage had tended to be extreme--"Jules Vernian and largely propaganda." His belief was that because radio could not replace social interaction, its utility was largely limited to "isolated people like farmers, the sightless and those who are nearly deaf. Besides, it will provide a valuable function in bad or severe weather, when city dwellers want to remain at home" (January 27, 1927, p. 622).

Some of the critics, however, feared that radio might be too effective. Harry Hansen suggested that radio provided one more element of confusion in an already hectic society. "Can a world be hungry for more than it already receives in the bulky newspaper, the magazine, the theater, and the motion picture?" (1925, March 25, p. 325). And Rose Macaulay predicted the couch potato phenomenon in a tongue-in-cheek Forum article. "Those of us who have a whim to see a little

country landscape, without the trouble of taking a walk or a journey, will be shown vignettes of field, woods, and lanes which would cause others to expire of boredom" (1927, December, p. 819). So the earliest evaluation of the medium itself was heavily weighted toward social concerns and this emphasis on social impact has never diminished.

Evaluating a New Dramatic Form

As radio content increased in sophistication, the concern with what broadcasting could do was followed by an interrogation of how and how well it could do it. During the first ten years of broadcasting, content evolved from the simple transmission of "found material"--sports, spot news, interviews, and audio pickups of stage plays--to the creation of original radio material. One of the earliest critiques of plays on radio was a Popular Radio report on a statement by Edward Childs Carpenter, President of the American Dramatists, decrying the practice of reading scripts aloud to the radio audience. He argued that the mere reading aloud, without attempts at characterization or the accompaniment of appropriate sound, severely deprived the intention of the author and failed to represent the play adequately. He stressed the importance of dramatic performance, and suggested "It is not at all improbable that radio will evolve a technique all its own in the matter of dramatic productions" (Plays by radio, 1924, May 17, p. 26).

The fact that radio began to do exactly that is underscored by a 1928 summary article by one of network radio's first on-air personalities describing the changes made in dramatic presentation to accommodate the radio audience. Graham McNamee argued: "Every new form of communication that comes along has to develop its own literature....Now radio is struggling, painfully, patiently, and very earnestly with the task" (p. 20).

According to McNamee, the use of music as an aid in conveying emotion and providing transitions was one of the devices radio had developed. Additionally, performance was altered from the strong, theatrical delivery necessary for the stage to a more intimate and natural style. Pacing was quickened: "The scenes of a radio play are always quite short. The action must be swift. Hence there is a frequent changing of scene" (p. 21). Additionally, the director assumed greater control of the production than in theater. In all, this early summary provided a thorough overview of the dramatic qualities of the medium, and McNamee was not alone in this interest.

Genevieve Cain offered another complex analysis of the difficulties and demands of radio programming in a 1929 American Mercury article. She was pessimistic about the future of radio drama because "The deficiencies of radio in casting a spell on its audience which will be credible for even a moment are apparent....Voices over the radio are not

easily distinguishable, scenes cannot be visualized and their listeners are subject to innumerable distractions" (p. 455). That observation was frequently debated, and some of Cain's other concerns foreshadowed longterm debates. She worried about the intrusion of commercial messages on both story form and content, the demands of commercialism for popularity over enlightenment, and the sheer bulk of program demand. "A programme manager, faced with the problem of arranging anywhere from eight to twenty programs a day must find variety somewhere" (p. 453).

By 1929, Drama and Theatre Arts were offering regular articles on writing and performance for radio, aimed at entertainment professionals. The initial animosity evidenced by the 1924 statement of the dramatists and playwrights organization vanished quickly when the creators of the works began to see radio as a new and different outlet for their work and a potential source for income rather than a poor imitation of stage presentation.

A Developing Form

Critics entered the 1930s with social concerns for a global depression and the resultant political unrest. In the broadcast industry, networks were expanding rapidly, and professionally prepared radio content became widely available to the public. The subdivision of critical emphasis became more pronounced as radio completed the transition from an amateur, participatory medium to a commercial medium in which

the information flows in one direction--from the broadcast professional to the audience member.

The critics considered the content of the fictions more completely, and explored effects of the technology, the mode of production, and the dynamics of human agency on the drama. Harper's and Saturday Review published serious analyses of radio drama, and Time and Newsweek introduced regular, though less rigorous, comment on programs. Broadcasting was established in 1931 as a business-oriented reporter on the industry and Theater Arts took a serious interest in the participation of the creative community. American academics tended to consider electronic communication more significant as a commercial enterprise than an artistic endeavor or social phenomenon, although their European counterparts were seriously concerned with the effect of mass distribution on the artifact and the society.

The programming the critics were evaluating had been changing through the 1920s and by the end of that decade a unique narrative form for radio drama had established a foothold. Episodic dramas were popular in the evenings and the daytime serial dramas garnered a large audience with their low-key, slow-moving narratives. Simultaneously, the network anthologies like the CBS Workshop were offering prestige dramas to the radio audience and noteworthy single episodes were widely reviewed. For example, poet Archibald MacLeisch's 1937 presentation of the verse drama "Fall of the

City" drew praises from both the magazine and trade critics. A Harper's critic described the politically-oriented work as a major step toward legitimizing radio drama through its "feeling of actuality and importance" (Denison, 1938, May, p. 367) and a Time reviewer claimed: "artistically, radio is really to come of age" (Theatre: Fall of the City, 1937, April 19, p. 60).

Evaluating a Developing Form

One of the first magazine writers to tackle the task of critiqu.ng broadcast drama gracefully and effectively was Cyrus Fisher of The Forum and Century. Writing from July, 1932, to March, 1934, Fisher articulated most clearly the concerns shared by many of his fellow magazine critics who acknowledged the importance of traditional story and performance values, but sensed, as much as knew, that broadcasting demanded both adaptation and innovation.

Another insightful critic was Harper's editor Merril Denison, who discussed the state of broadcasting on a more philosophical level. In the trade press, Val Gielgud of Theatre Arts and several anonymous Billboard reporters provide the most thorough and insightful coverage of the drama during the experimental phase of the early 1930s.

Most of these critics brought with them a background in traditional criticism; their notions of the proper use and form of drama came from a long theatrical and/or literary tradition. But they were faced with the very real

differences of mass distribution to the homes of an anonymous audience, an aural-only performance, and the episodic series. Therefore, results of their efforts were uneven. When applying traditional standards directly to the new medium the critics responded quickly and uniformly; for example, they agreed that radio drama should offer positive social values and emphasize the qualities of traditional high culture. And where adaptation was necessary, the critics were willing to explore the options, as with the quickened pacing and more elaborate descriptions of imagery prescribed for an aural medium.

But where the changes in form conflicted with established values--as in the problem of adapting characteristics of the well-made play to serial and series narrative--the critical response was less adequate. While they regularly deplored the lack of innovation on the part of the program creators, these critics might well face the same charge on their failure to develop a criticism more responsive to the unique aspects of broadcasting. In 1934 Merril Denison claimed radio was not receiving the critical support that had benefited motion pictures in their formative years, and by 1938 he announced: "Thanks to the failure of the press to provide respectable criticism of programs, no definite standards have evolved, nor has any sense of discrimination been developed among listeners" (1938, May, p. 365).

Social Criteria

The primary measure of quality in radio drama was the demand for social service adopted from other forms. All the traditional concerns with the purpose of drama were intensified with the perception of broadcasting as a reconstruction of reality, and the social utility of the program was--and still is--the primary evaluative element. The negotiable aspect of this standard was the articulation of the individual critic's interpretation of what is good for society and the appraisal of how well various program forms met these requirements.

Emphasizing the good of reaching a mass audience, RCA president David Sarnoff argued: "If education and culture are to increase our national stature, it will be through the democracy of education, not the aristocracy of education, through the democracy of culture, not the aristocracy of culture" (Codel, 1930, p. 190). He favored presentation of a wide range of ideas to a mass audience over an emphasis on high culture for a limited audience.

Composer George Gershwin and academician Dr. Blanche Colton Williams debated this same issue on a more theoretical plane. Where Gershwin saw radio as a richly expressive medium appropriate to the times, Dr. Williams worried that the proliferation of mass culture served to desensitize the audience. Gershwin argued: "The art that represents us must be....a crowded art, an art that expresses the dozens and

hundred things that are always knocking at us and inviting. The radio is the very symbol of this life-enriching" (Both sides of the radio argument, 1930, January 11, p. 26).

Five years later, in an article titled "A.M. Radio and Vaudeville Culture," A.M. Sullivan assumed a middle-of-the road position, citing radio's responsibility to offer valuable information without becoming tedious. "Radio is not, and should not be a school-room, but it has tremendous potential for the spread of good taste" (Sullivan, 1935, December 13, p. 178).

A 1939 indictment of soap operas, however, worried that radio carried the notion of a democracy of culture too far. Harper's Merril Denison claimed that "to educators, intellectuals, and uplift groups....radio serials serve as outstanding examples of social irresponsibility of commercial sponsorship" (1939, April, p. 502). He charged that the commercial sponsors of these programs had failed to inform or enlighten the audience, being satisfied instead with merely engaging the listener.

The dual concerns of commercialism and mass appeal were inextricably linked at this point. Subsequent critics would attempt to renegotiate and redefine the relationship between the two, but almost always with the assumption that commercial sponsorship is inherently degrading to program quality and the ability of broadcasting to fulfil its social responsibility.

A second major area of social concern arose from the same sense of direct communication through radio that intensified concerns about commercial motivations. The degree of verisimilitude was held to be a vital element in the evaluation of drama, and broadcasting was seen to possess a unique potential for the aural interpretation of reality. From its earliest commercial use, broadcasting was perceived to offer its listeners opportunities to broaden their horizons through vicarious experience.

Intensifying this window-on-the-world philosophy, the critics of the 1930s retained a sense of the broadcast reproduction of an event being equal or even superior to attending the event; as Seldes had suggested earlier, the link between the broadcast auditor/spectator and the event was somehow perceived as more direct than that of the fiction reader or the theater patron. Even a very negative Variety article referred to radio's "vital direct link with the household and family" (Not Advertising Agencies..., 1930, July 30, p. 111).

Perhaps as a result of this sense of presence, critical evaluations stressed broadcast links to reality. In one use of the term, conforming to the mandate for social responsibility, the critics favored a mythic reality in which

the stories demonstrated the rewards of appropriate ethical behaviors--for example, loyalty to and defense of God, family, and country. The issue was not really whether or not these stories accurately reproduced the situation in the nation at the time, but whether the public was persuaded that they represented a "good" and "desirable" reality in which the dominant values of the society at the time were confirmed.

The means of portraying this mythic reality in a believable form might best be defined as realism. The traditional critics of drama had long recognized the separation between reality and realism, and endorsed the use of theatrical device to achieve an aura of reality, to make a fiction believable.

Writing to the readers of Theatre Arts in 1931, Merril Denison said that the power of radio lies with the actor who can "create an illusion of reality" (1931, December, p. 851). In his Harper's forum, Denison said that "radio more than any other medium has the power to create a feeling of reality" (1939, April, p. 505). The key words here are feeling and illusion. Similarly, Forum's Cyrus Fisher lauded a 1933 production for its bold entry into "audible dramatic illusion" (1933, April,p. 254). This general valuation of the

skillful creation of illusion can also be interpreted at a more specific level--a questioning of the formal practices best suited to radio drama.

Formal Criteria

The formal practices through which the creators achieved the illusion may be subdivided into narrative and technical structures, and this is where a tension developed between traditional and innovative values. The narrative form in radio was altered by complications in creative control, time limitations and commercial interruptions, and the reappearance of characters on a regular basis.

Many of these critics believed drama and literature were free to establish their own length and pace (a debatable assumption in itself), therefore radio drama was essentially inferior because it was compelled to fit a story into a set time period and allow for breaks in the story at regular intervals. They also feared that the interests of the sponsor dictated the content of the program to the detriment of the public interest.

Genevieve Cain compared the demand for programming with "keeping the monster satisfactorily nourished" (1929, August, p. 452), suggesting that the volume of commercial demand for programming was a detriment to quality. Along the same line,

a Variety writer claimed in 1930 that "Anything noteworthy in radio has been an accident. That goes for Amos 'n' Andy, Vallee, and all the rest. None was given any special nurturing or prepared in any marked [way] by radio or adv. agencies" (Not Adv. Agencies..., 1930, July 30, p. 96). Again, the thrust of the article was that commercialism was essentially damaging to program quality.

Surprisingly, the most optimistic voices on this issue were those of the Theatre Arts contributors. In the tradition of "the show must go on," they suggested that time constraints were no more restrictive than the physical constraints of the stage and that in issues of content control the most competent combatant wins. Merril Denison said that with skillful execution of good scripts "radio can become a dramatic medium of great value" (1933, November, p. 851). John Anderson (1943, June) discussed the need for radio to reconcile interests of art and business and said that in his experience "strong minded" authors tend to win in debates on content, emphasizing story value over commercial considerations.

Neither constituency engaged in a full exploration of the transformation of narrative required by the continuing series. The bulk of comment on form concerned the serial

narratives (soaps), which were deplored because there was no closure, no dramatic resolution. Their characters moved from one crisis to another and the plateaus of temporary serenity provided the least satisfying episodes. This pattern was so contrary to the ingrained belief in the structure of the well-made play that the critics were appalled by its success and questioned the intelligence of any viewer who was intrigued by the form.

Cain described the form this way: "Interest is focused on two or three main characters, with enough thread of story running from week to week for the feeble intelligence of the radio audience to follow" (1929, August, p. 454) and Merril Denison alleged that among the soap operas, only Vic and Sade was "literate" (1939, April, p. 503). Soap writer Michael Wylie countered that the critics had removed themselves from the mainstream of public opinion and failed to understand the involvement of the regular listener (1942, November).

The episodic series was similarly problematic for the critics of this period because the resolution of one crisis did not establish a happy and serene future for the characters. Unlike the life-threatening crisis of the traditional theatrical or literary narrative, the very nature of the radio drama series dictated more modest levels of

challenge. In the case of the family dramas this translated to more mundane problems; in the action-adventures the protagonist was involved on a professional, rather than personal basis, and was somewhat distanced from the life-changing impact of the resolution. Traditional dramatic narrative was restricted to the one-time-only presentations, and the critics failed to adapt to this change of scale as quickly as the radio dramatists did. Therefore, there was--and still is--a recurring tendency to privilege anthology programs over any other form of series.

All the critics were, however, conscientious about acknowledging radio's uniqueness in technical matters. The importance of ambience was clearly recognized in the comments of both trade and magazine critics on music and sound effects. Like film, radio was dealing with the ability of the creator to direct the attention and influence the interpretation of the story.

In 1931, Denison said that radio had a unique advantage in scene-setting because in an audio-only medium there is no conflicting visual reality to spoil the illusion (1931, December). A Billboard author agreed that the demand for concentration, and thus involvement, on the part of the listener was one of the strengths of radio drama (Wilson,

1940, December 28). Within her August, 1929, American Mercury article, Genevieve Cain offered contradictory opinions on the potential for creating an illusion. "The deficiencies of radio in casting a spell on its audience which will be credible for even a moment are apparent" (p. 455). Yet on the same page she said, "The sound effects which are used to support this fiction can be managed quite nicely."

Cyrus Fisher did attempt to define and evaluate some specific devices he considered significant. He was particularly annoyed by the frequent use of a studio announcer: "No stage play for the past several hundred years has required a full-throated gentleman to step out between acts and carefully explain....the next act....No, all of that is nonsense and you wouldn't stand for it in the theater, yet night after night our continuity writers must supply us with these audible signposts" (1933, October, p. 256). He did favor other innovations that combined forms and added a new twist to the story. In a review of John Henry--Black River Giant, Fisher was enthusiastic about the director's blend of negro spirituals, sound effects, and the traditional story-within-a-story device to create a unique presentation (1933, April).

Val Gielgud gave Theatre Arts readers one of the most analytical treatments of radio as a unique technology in a 1937 article that might be construed as an epitaph. Gielgud's evaluation was that radio drama was just finding its true form as television appeared to take centerstage. The specific elements cited in radio's improvement were the increased vocal control and contrast at the microphone, the use of multiple studio setups, and the improvement in technical control panels, all of which added to the illusion of the drama. All this, however, was framed by an acute awareness that television drama would be "the death" of its radio cousin (1937, February).

Summary of Emerging Criteria

In summary, radio drama progressed from a technological curiosity to a developing art or craft with a whole set of standards and expectations during the 1930s. From the very primary assumption that broadcasting should exert a positive influence on society, grew a much wider range of standards about what good it should do and how it should go about doing it. As might be expected, there was no firm agreement on any of these positions, but there was sufficient consistency to allow some generalization.

In the politically and economically troubled 1930s, there was an emphasis on serving the society by informing and/or uplifting the individual. Notions of cultural uplift competed with concerns for socialization and education here, but the critics agreed that radio--like other fictional forms--should not merely entertain, but should add some new dimension to the listener's body of knowledge. Because so much of the criticism in the formative years was written by advocates of the traditional arts (i.e. theater and literary critics), there was a tendency to privilege cultural uplift in radio drama criticism and look to the tastes of the cultural elite for guidance in evaluation. Much of the resultant criticism dealt with fears of the inherent degradation of culture by mass distribution.

Another group of critics, however, was most concerned with reaching the mass audience. While they were by no means adverse to incorporating a learning experience into the programming, these authors were more concerned with framing that message in a manner that pleased the public; the concept of entertainment as a social good was far more acceptable to them. Even the aesthetically-oriented trade critics were enthusiastic about the democratization of culture, and saw

broadcasting as a new opportunity to share their art rather than as a threat to its purity.

The very idea of radio drama as an art was at issue with virtually all the critics throughout the 1930s. The problem of evaluating the quality of program execution was still far from being resolved, but critics in all sectors were calling for experimentation to expand the repertoire of audio techniques and begin to establish a specific set of criteria for evaluating radio.

Uniqueness of form and style was one of the first criteria to appear. Although they couldn't define it, they felt certain they would know it when they saw it. Cyrus Fisher, for example, called for the development of "genuine radio material" (1933, April, p. 254) and "true radio drama" (1933, October, p. 256). A 1933 Broadcasting article summarized radio's strengths as timeliness and freshness (Wilson, 1933, March 15). Change seemed to be perceived as progress in most instances. In addition to uniqueness, involvement was also highly prized. A program which brought the audience member to a point of intellectual or emotional participation was considered to be of good quality. Although there was a professed preference for intellectual stimulation

over emotional "manipulation," the critics were often pleased by programs which involved the emotions.

In many senses, an enduring framework for broadcast criticism was constructed during the first two decades of commercial radio. The primary critical assumption was that broadcasting was a uniquely intimate and involving medium which, because of its potential impact, bore a responsibility to help its audience interpret reality in a manner beneficial to both the individual and the society. The primacy of the social obligation meant that a substantial portion of the body of criticism was devoted to the ways in which the drama fulfilled its social responsibility, and the favored fulfillment was the presentation of a socially acceptable mythic reality in which the audience could practice responses to events in a more immediate reality. The second--and corollary--enduring assumption was that formal practices should exploit the unique attributes of radio drama to serve these social goals. The problem with this second assumption was that the critics themselves had difficulty defining these unique attributes.

REFERENCES

Adams, M. (1946). The poor young art of radio. Nation, 162, pp. 544-5.

Anderson, J. (1943, June). Notes on radio. Theatre Arts, pp. 341-346.

Beuick, M.D. (1927, January 22). The limited social effect of radio broadcasting. The American Journal of Sociology, pp. 615-622.

Both sides of the radio argument. (1930, January 11). Literary Digest, p. 104.

Cain, G. (1929, August). Flogging the ether. American Mercury, pp. 452-5.

Codel, M. (1930). Radio and its Future. NY: Harper & Brothers Publishing.

Corwin, N. (1940, February). The sovereign word. Theatre Arts, pp. 130-136.

Davis, R.E. (1976). Response to Innovation--A Study of Popular Argument about New Mass Media. NY: Arno Press.

Denison, M. (1931, December). The broadcast play. Theatre Arts, pp. 1008-1011.

_____. (1933, November). The actor and radio. Theatre Arts, pp. 849-855.

_____. (1934, April). Why isn't radio better? Harper's, pp. 576-86.

_____. (1938, May). Radio and the writer. Theatre Arts, pp. 365-370.

_____. (1939, April). Soap opera. Harper's, pp. 498-505.

Drama by radio. (1924, May 1). Living Age, p. 432.

Fisher. C. (1932, July through 1934, March). Radio reviews. Century and Forum, various locations.

Gielgud, V. (1930, November). The broadcast play. Theatre Arts, pp. 956-962.

_____. (1931, June). Sidelights on the broadcast play. Theatre Arts, pp. 479-484.

_____. (1937, February). Radio play--In the age of television. Theatre Arts, pp. 108-112.

Hansen, H. (1925, March 25). Some mediatations on radio. Nation, pp. 324-325.

Hart, J.K. (1922, March 18). Radiating culture. Survey, pp. 948-9.

Hutchens, J.K. (1946, May 4). Same time, same station, Saturday Review, pp. 16-17.

Loveman, A. (1941, February 8). Knowledge and the image. Saturday Review, p. 8.

McNamee, G. (1928, September). One-night stands on the air. American Mercury, pp. 20-21+.

Macaulay, R. (1927, December). Armchair millenium. Forum, pp. 817-820.

Newsweek. (From 1934). Weekly program listings.

Not advertising agencies nor radio able to date to develop any sort of valuable showmanship. (1930, July 30). Variety, p. 96+.

Plays by radio. (1924, May 17). Literary Digest, pp. 26-27.

Radio as art form: A symposium featuring Irving Reis, Merrill Denison, and Robert Brown. In C.S. Marsh (Ed.), Educational Broadcasting, 1937 (pp. 283-305). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938,

Radio Review. (1925, July 2). Variety, p. 70.

Radio series by authors syndicated. (1925, July 2). Variety, p. 70.

Radio: the new social force. (1924, March 19). Outlook, pp. 465-7.

Seldes, G. (1927, March 23). Listening in. New Republic, pp. 140-141.

Siepmann, C. (1941, June). Further thoughts on radio criticism. Public Opinion Quarterly, 5, pp. 308-312.

Sound hound. (1943, November 1). Newsweek, p. 74.

Sullivan, A.M. (1935, December 13). Radio and vaudeville culture. Commonweal, pp. 176-178.

Time. (1937, April 19). Theatre column, p. 60.

_____. (1937, August 30). Theatre column, p. 24.

_____. (From 1938). Weekly Radio column.

Volkening, H. (1926, December). Abuses of radio broadcasting. Current History, pp. 396-400.

Wilson, F. (1940, December 28). They like talkin' shows. Billboard, p. 22.

Wilson, L.B. (1933, March 15). Theater man looks at radio competition. Broadcasting, p. 11+.

Wylie, M. (1942, November). Washboard weepers. Harper's, pp. 633-638.